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• SIGNATURES •

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# SIGNATURES

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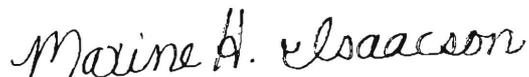
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It is our pleasure to bring to you the Spring '88 issue of Signatures literary magazine. A lot of time and effort was taken to put forth this magazine. I would like to thank all of my staff for the help that was needed to produce a magazine of this quality.

I would also like to express my appreciation to the Institute Creative Arts Committee, the College of Liberal Arts, Student Directorate, Complementary Education, and the College of Applied Science and Technology, for their funding of our magazine. We had a lot of hard times in getting money for this issue and thought that we would not have a way to produce this publication. Fortunately, on account of these organizations, we were able to put forth a publication of fine quality such as this one.

Next year, we will be having another issue of Signatures. If you would like to contribute your poems, prose, artwork, or photos, please do not hesitate to drop them off in our mailfolder at Student Directorate.

Please take the time to gain an appreciation for the work and culture contained in Signatures. I hope you enjoy it as much as we enjoyed putting it together for you.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Maxine H. Isaacson".

Maxine H. Isaacson  
Editor-in-Chief

The apprehension of not knowing and the stride which leads us to invulnerability are those which a seeker must take. If we wander upon a stranger, we might ask for direction. If we are true believers, we advance without hesitation, but if we doubt because of our cleverness, we may only complete a circle.

Robert Wolf

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## Twelve O'clock Tango

“Ten.”

Small puffs of dust rose from the sun-baked street with each cautious fallen sole. *Ching...ching..ching.* The slow, steady pace of the steel spurs sliced through the desert air.

“Nine.”

His towering shadow loomed as dark and ominous as his name across the deserted strip. Black Bart caressed his moment of glorious vengeance from arms-length. *Almost there...* The familiar taste was sweet and dry in his mouth.

“Eight,” yelled the postmaster coldly through gritted teeth.

A million miles away, Cool Hand Luke carved his own world into the tense emotions surrounding him. *This is the moment of truth*, he thought. *Bart had his trial years ago...this is to be mine.* Sarah Spencer peered nervously from behind the livery stable post. Her eyes squinted intently as the zenith sun glinted sharply off his five pointed courage.

“Seven.”

He won't be the first or the last thought Bart, but this notch he'd cut extra-big.—he'd had far too much trouble from this one for a normal wedge.

“Six.”

The voice shattered Luke’s protective bubble of confidence. He immediately became aware of everything around him: the town he protected, the people who depended on him, and most clearly, the man behind him who gripped his emotions with an iron fist. He was trapped in the tunnels of his own mind. Each step away from the black garbed prairie man brought him one step closer to becoming that notch on the gunslinger’s belt.

“Five.” The postmaster’s voice seemed louder now, with an increasingly nervous edge.

*CHING.* The sound reverberated through Luke’s head like a pounding headache. He must find a way out...

“Luke!” He heard the small voice to his side—faint, but demanding attention.

“Four.”

Across Bart’s weathered face appeared a horrible grin, a window to his confidence. Each muscle was relaxed and sure. He could see the dark red stain spreading across the white vest. *Moments...*

Luke turned his head and scanned the crowd, looking desperately for his last chance of salvation.

“Three.”

“Luke!” the voice cried again. The marshal’s eyes leaped to the young boy calling to him. Luke looked deep into the child’s eyes, then at his parent’s protective but tender hands on the boy’s shoulders. Reality slapped him violently across his face. Now he was acutely aware of his duty, and his problem twenty paces behind him. Determination rushed through his body. He was free!

“Two.” The shakey tone betrayed the postmasters placid exterior.

*Ching.....ching.....ching.....time* slowed unbearably. Both men knew the feeling: so close, and yet...so...far...

“One.”

*One. One. One.* How many times would the word echo in Luke’s mind before the next? His fingers curled slightly in anticipation of the postmaster’s next thought. *One...*

“Draw!” barked the postmaster in his final role.

Silently, silkily, Black Bart wheeled himself round, pivoting in an innate ritual dance *that would culminate in a virgin sacrifice*, he assured himself. His hot finger touched the cold steel trigger with ecstasy, squeezing it gently as a long time lover. His eyes aimed down her sleek, hard back to his opponent. *A little more pressure and...*

The metallic messenger tore through his heart with passionate magnetism. As he watched his sword fall gracefully to the dirt, Bart knew he would soon follow. He shaded his eyes against his luminescent, shining victor. The shocking vision blurred, and then was gone as Black Bart met his shadow for the first and last times.

Just down the street, Cool Hand Luke gazed though the thin, blue gunsmoke in muted satisfaction. *Justice had been dealt.* His star, Sarah observed, shone brighter than ever.

Benjamin Stahl

Untitled

i always wanted to take your porcelain hands  
and run 'round Mt. Hope cementary  
with little paisley books under our arms

and i'll look English schoolboy  
and you'll look English schoolboy

and we'll let the snow hide our faces and words...  
but not our footsteps  
while camouflaging Keat's words-  
or maybe Pound's,  
the traffic may mistaken me for a boy  
when i kiss you  
when you read me that poem  
about your bleeding penis  
you are my utopia

Paula T.

Bar

Have you  
ever  
noticed  
in the men's  
room  
the dry saliva  
spit  
before the relief of the bladder jewel  
I wonder do women do the same?

John d. Greb

## Technological Darkness

Sirens blaring bright  
Horns piercing the night  
Technicians all around  
But not a friend in sight

Nothing human at all  
Machines wall to wall  
Gazing with watchful eye  
Tracing the victims heart

Fifty CC's of this  
Twenty more of that  
Poke, jab and clear  
Shockwave to the heart

Roller-coaster ride  
Tossing the victim 'round  
Needles piercing flesh  
All for the victims best

Reaching for a friend  
Something not allowed  
No people with real words  
All around is cold and gray

Those same four walls  
There's nothing left to see  
Alone and waiting the day  
Those doctors let me be

Benjamin Lee

## OPEN AND SHUT

Are you free?  
Is that fist  
Enclosed  
Upon a mind  
Or itself?  
Does it open up  
Enough  
To let the light in  
Or the wind out?  
I knew a man  
His fist was tight  
As if he  
Held  
The guiding light  
Leading him to  
Ruin  
Or Diogenes  
Who did not find him free  
What truths  
Lie  
Behind the  
Wall  
Where orphans wail  
And hunters call  
On those who never lie  
Asleep  
But think instead  
Of fists pounding, pounding  
On their heads

David Lloyd Booth

## Home

She came home to me one afternoon.

It was cold out—snow on the sidewalk, ice glazing the windshields. A sylph brushed through the trees, slipping under the door with a hoarse sigh.

As I took her in, a lost wind-spirit dashed in, raced around the room, and died in the corner.

She wore a mask of neutrality, but her eyes had a dark cool heat. I felt them slowly puncturing my eyes, my guts, slowly and painfully. I took her coat.

“You’ll forgive me?” I asked.

“For?..”

I kissed her neck and held her tightly. She was a warm fire in a dark sullen alley. The wounds in my stomach bled warm, syruplike acid. She was as real as the brutal, biting winter—and here she was.

I touched her cheek, slowly drawing a line down to her chin. I carried her upstairs.

“How have you been?” she asked.

I placed her on the bed and sat on the floor at her feet. I took her shoes off—they slid easily away. She wore black stockings. I traced a circle around her knee, a line down the back of her calf, then back up her knee, drawing spirals. My fingertips skimmed over the silk with a hushed whisper.

We lay next to each other in the darkness, the cool and warm of the room cloaking me. The winds outside were howling, moaning. I don’t know how long she will be here.

“How long are you staying?” I asked.

“Long enough.”

I was about to say something—it evaporated from my mouth as I touched her neck and shoulders with my lips.

Her back was turned to me, legs curled.

You’ve given me a second chance; I won’t let you go this time, won’t hurt you.

I held her tightly, stroking her arm, her hair...

\* \* \*

His room was a garbage dump, filthy and cold. He lay on the sheets, naked. A blast of icy wind swept over him. He curled up tighter, blankets on the floor. He curled up even tighter, closer to the empty bottle in his arms like a hungry, greedy baby.

Aldric Hama

Spring

This is the season!

T T

A R

L E

L E

Budding,

Morning Birds

Chirping,

Field Deer

P

VE

M I

O R

U N

J G

Quick Moving  
Creek,

First Dipping

Nude

APRIL First

Cool Mist

Nippling Sensation.

Sun Touch

Winter Dust

Spring Cleaning

Cob Web

of Mind...

...Cold

Blue

EYES

Skirts Thigh High

in HeatRuns

Down

RGE Bill

anonymous

## Death of Nirvana

I felt the freeze  
As the sun put gloves on  
Today.  
And I was surprised  
to see  
Jack Nip  
With you  
Standing  
          There naked  
Giving off  
          More  
              Warmth  
Then Mercury.

So I took my self  
to the point of vulnerability  
that one has never seen before  
Stripped  
to see  
Deep in dawns sweetest sorrow  
Coiled  
          Hissing  
With tears  
I reach  
But not far enough  
For the morning  
I gaze  
Through the gray rain window  
That brings the death of nirvana

John d. Greb

## The Blind Date

'Twas a quarter to eight  
And all through the house,  
She ran around searching  
For her favorite blouse.

Her stockings were hung  
On the curtain rod so bare,  
She hoped they'd be dry  
By the time 'he' got there.

Her little brother was nestled  
All snug in his bed,  
While visions of gremlins  
Danced in his head.

Her mother in curlers  
and her father in cap,  
Were as anxious as she was  
To meet this 'fine' chap.

When out in the driveway  
There arose such a clatter,  
They sprang from their chairs  
To see what was the matter.

Away to the window  
They flew like a flash,  
Pulled back the curtains  
And stared while they gasped.

The skid marks on the front  
of the newly mowed lawn,  
caused her parents to tremble  
And shout with alarm.

When what to their wondering  
Eyes should appear,  
But a gang riding cycles  
Clad in black leather gear.

With a restless young leader  
So loud and so quick,  
They hoped at that moment  
That he wasn't "the" Nick.

More rapid than eagles  
His comrades they came,  
And he wished and shouted  
and called them by name.

"Now Stupid, now Stinky  
Now Butcher and Bruiser,  
On Crippler, on Killer  
on Lamebrain and Loser!"

"To the top of the porch  
To the top of the wall,  
Now run over, run over  
Run over all!"

Up to the doorstep  
The gangsters they flew,  
With their leader in front  
They followed his moves.

And then in a twinkling  
They heard at the door,  
The banging and pounding  
That vibrated the floor.

As they drew in their breath  
And were turning around,  
Through the trembling door  
Nick arrived with a bound.

He was dressed all in black  
From his head to his toes,  
And his clothes were all torn  
Up with holes upon holes.

With a tight leather jacket  
That clung onto his back,  
He resembled a mugger  
Prepared to attack.

His eyes were so beady  
His nostrils they flared,  
His teeth were as straight  
as his electric blue hair.

The stump of a joint  
He held tight in his teeth,  
And the smoke it encircled  
His head like a wreath.

He had a small face  
But a very large fist,  
That smacked his left palm  
With an accompanying hiss.

He was tough in appearance  
A right frightening young hood,  
But he shook their hands gently  
And paid for the yard.

A wink of his eye  
And the nod of his head,  
Soon let them know  
They had nothing to dread.

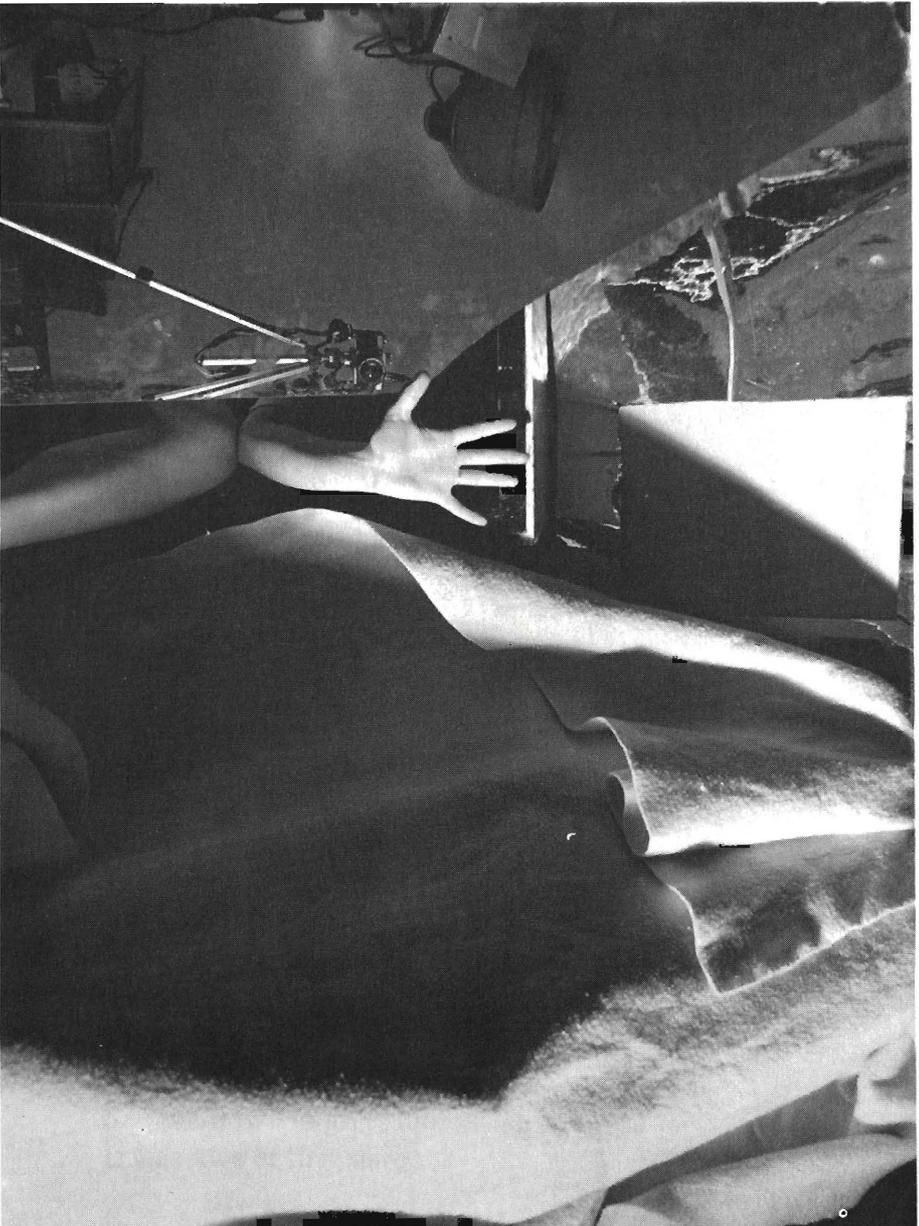
He spoke not a word  
But went straight to the tube,  
Then looked in the fridge  
For some left over food.

By snapping his fingers  
While combing his hair,  
She ran down to greet him-  
It was love at first stare.

They sprang to his bike  
To his team gave a whistle,  
And they cruised down the street  
Like the down of a thistle.

But they heard him exclaim  
As he sped out of sight,  
“Check ya later folks,  
I’ll have ‘er back by midnight!”

Nadine G. Messier



Michelle Manes

The Night Stalker  
Marty Tomasi

Quietly, a boy slipped out the door and stood silently, as if waiting for something. The cool, autumn air felt clean in his lungs, and he began to move. Slowly at first, then gradually faster, he ran towards the woods. There he was in his element; he was among living things that bore no grudges and spoke no lies. All was quiet.

It had been one of those September partly-cloudies that, for some strange reason, made one feel completely alive. A kind of day where one's strides are extra-long when walking as the roundness of the Earth's arching beneath is felt. Yet, the boy had been reprimanded for getting caught up in the plain wonder of the day, and was scolded for not taking care of matters at hand. He now just wanted to get away from it all.

The boy slid down the edge of the hill that separated the woods from his world. An abrupt halt snapped a fallen stick. A creature was also disturbed from its nightly tasks. Easing away from the animal, the boy crawled through thick underbrush, which opened near a creek. This stream flowed past a crescent shore of rounded stones where, in the daylight hours, tiny minnows ran the water. Toward the center, the dark currents were hurried.

He walked a few feet along the crescent, now filled with sounds of frogs' leaping into the water at his approach, and then stepped back onto the soft and quieter earth. Just beyond him, tall pines marched down to meet the creek. A dark silhouette of a railroad bridge seemed a menacing threat to the natural world the boy so loved.

Crouching as if trailing an unsuspecting prey, the boy began to move quickly towards the bridge. His thoughts on his reasons for being here flowed furiously, causing beads of sweat to run down his forehead. He had been looking for answers to questions he had quietly hidden away. Forgetting where they were hidden, he thought they'd be among the things he so loved, so he came to these woods.

The boy reached the bottom supports of the tressel. Grasping an overhead girder, he pulled himself up onto the tracks that ran across the bridge. He stopped to catch his breath, leaning over the side. He shivered and thought about getting out of the air that was getting colder by the minute, until he realized the tracks were shaking. A loud whistle verified the approach of a speeding train.

He tightened his grip on the bridges side railing, knowing there would be no time to get away. The train rambled closer, and his thoughts turned once more to those questions, now seemingly never to be answered. There was no panic, just painful thoughts. The train gave a deafening blast on its whistle. His fingers closed tighter yet, and the train sped past.

The boy kept his eyes shut for what must have been ten minutes. When he opened them, a tear escaped down his face. Jumping off the bridge, he stood in the creekbed for just a few moments. Then, he slowly walked away. There'd be other nights for stalking.

Marty Tomasi



## Wasted in Time

a little more cocaine  
black burn black bruises that don't hurt  
i forgive him  
i can see him  
beating black  
beating back broken fingernails  
that make runs in nightgowns  
stuck to sweaty backs in damp motels

backsides ripped open

nights in motels in East Orange  
and i say stop it Ray  
stop it stop it stop  
it  
and he leaves a ten on the table and  
a pack of cigarettes  
my face hurts

sometimes i forget his name  
when the nosebleeds are really bad  
and the coke burns worse  
my hair is stuck to my face like wet spider legs  
and i wake up shaking

he is there  
Ray is there

yeah little girl  
yeah baby  
i'm here  
it's o.k.

Tabitha Haggerty

Decision

Last year, it was the same  
A different room, though,  
and empty bottles.  
Not the room I love with a promising bottle of Blanc de  
Blanc  
on the floor.

If John Updike could see me now he'd laugh and feed me  
popcorn.

I'll leave  
He said  
only if you make me go.  
cigarettes and wine drive me into early morning,

The creases in the sheets were made only by me.

Kerry Levison

## Untitled

Sweat dripped off his face as the sun poured down onto the land. Roots of buried trees hung out of the sandy dirt cliff like exposed nerve endings as he reached to pull himself one step closer to the top. The cliff trembled as his grasps stretched the tender protruding roots. There weren't enough roots to make it easy for him. If he was going to reach the top it would be with help from the cliff. He wanted a firm foothold on the summit unlike any he has had since he stood at its base. That was far below him now. His goal stood towering above. It was getting hotter; he climbed on.

A drop of sweat rolled down his cheek and fell into the soft dirt, glistening with the sun. Discouraged at times he would stop and rest awhile. From there clouds looked like reflections of the white bluff against a deep blue canvas. He would wonder why he was ascending this cliff. There were others less treacherous. Maybe he wanted to find out what others dreamed to know.

He looked upward. The sun gleamed down; it blinded him. Turning away, he climbed on.

anonymous

Crow Nest View

Bricks frozen  
In a black tar ocean  
Boast of hues  
But lack emotions.

No meadowlands.  
No foilage showers.  
No morning dew  
On tender flowers.

No gulls gliding.  
No scent of pine.  
No salty breeze  
On hanging chimes.

What a wonderful, wonderful  
World it would be...  
With one less brick  
And one more tree.

Pat Glynn

## Shades Of A Moment

1

Dismal  
Without shape  
Or direction  
Wanting only warmth  
And comfort  
Knowing he is real  
But not knowing  
What to do about it

2

Steel, metal, concrete  
Encasing what has never seen the light  
Unknowingly  
falling apart but not nearly fast enough  
Using a fucking nailfile  
With eyes closed  
flat, reciprocating  
shedding light  
But only when the switch is flicked

3

SCORN ME PROVOKE  
SOMETHING  
ANYTHING  
DENIED FOR SO LONG

PUT IT TO AN END  
RIP ME APART

THEN I WILL DO THE SAME FOR YOU

anonymous

don't grow old

don't grow old  
old  
only a word  
yet  
entering the heart  
evil appears  
mind  
turns to drought  
sensations  
disappear  
gestures obscured  
body wrinkles  
into frozen state  
where permanence becomes  
a pit in the ground

hyla silverstein

\*Five Winds  
I, Proximal to these  
In a field  
Closer than we are  
Your probity (you're so uptight)  
dismantles bunk beds  
lets cats fuel on rat drippings  
from the basement ceiling-  
a wired nostril  
chafing blistery heat raw and cold  
bend towards the blue light  
Commandeth my arrow alighteth  
your spine leaks out and i run  
sixty two bones in my lower half rattling  
a crazy monkey in a cage  
A wintry bat, the renegade spirit  
crosses my forehead  
stokes the fire  
untraceable webs  
crack the sidewalks\*

Nace



Robert T. Wolf

After a dream... I think

When I awoke  
I Felt the energy  
From all of the stars  
and all of the moons  
and all of the forces  
In the universe  
was inside me.  
I had seen the stars  
I had seen the moons  
Together we were  
All the forces  
in the universe.  
But in an instant  
The stars began to shoot  
Across the sky  
of your empty heart and  
fade in them blackness  
That filled you.  
And in less than a moment  
Your footstep  
With the weight of  
Ten thousand horses  
Wore paths through the moons  
That inspired me.  
And like a demon  
Stealing my breath  
as I slept  
You sucked the forces from within me  
where they had dwelled forever.

Linda B. Borgatti

## Chalk & Cheeks

the blackboard tradition  
chalk but, teacher has to wash away my learned A's, B's,  
and C's  
after school, she won't remember our cheruby gratitude  
She is a dead women.  
One of the bigger kids told me he'd killed her.  
after school, she doesn't know my friend like candy, espe-  
cially.  
Now and Later.  
In back, we pull hair.  
Survival of the fittest, we killed the missus.  
She doesn't sing along, she doesn't play right.  
She's got bad breath.  
We smooshed her under the bus and  
She just lay there.  
I liked her, she's just stupid is all.  
She didn't think we'd still hang around  
after school, she doesn't know my friends like candy,  
especially.  
Now and Later.

Nace

## The Food Chain

Sue's an ignoramus  
David loves to drink.  
Karen never listens.  
Michael never thinks.

Tommy's close-minded  
Dan's only out for "it".  
Anne's a pyromaniac.  
And I'm a hypocrite.

Billy's egotistic.  
Laura always lies.  
My peers are psychopathic!  
To overgeneralize.

We're a savage generation  
Destine to flip our lids,  
Then breed our favorite hang-ups  
And feed them to our kids.

Pat Glynn

My Head at the Bottom of a Totem Pole

My head at the bottom of a totem pole.  
My rank, my position in yours.  
My fear you relax in.  
Do I warm your ego  
Or grasp at your spine?  
You knew my sadness once.  
Now my dear you practice like the other,  
unstring my heart of lovebeads.  
Me. The tinsel left on the dead tree forgotten,  
once having glowed in your gaze.  
Shine you shall.  
Your eyes are dark of ignorance and innocence.

L.A.D.

Untitled

my daisy harp echoes in the wind  
your voice is felt, but not seen.  
I cry out, screaming obscenities  
in the rain.  
your silhoutte lengthens.

L.A.D.

### The First

dark, sweet  
syrup thick sweat  
on skin so smooth  
i want to pierce it  
and destroy its static.  
if only i could ingest you  
all at once  
and destroy my hunger-  
let me lose my hands  
in the silky blue coils  
that grace your face  
and i'll kiss your heavy eyelids  
to sleep.

anonymous

### Untitled

I am sitting like a lady shouldn't  
and the world is looking up my skirt  
But the world is you, and I don't mind

Katie Drake

Futura

Anne, Anne sex-

ton

what colors do you see?

are your days

grey sex-

ton?

or so vivid that they sicken

mixed with screaming baby girls?

Has Sylvia called you ugly

or more worthy of death than she?

Another chipped marble

finds a hole

in the labyrinth.

Paula Trotto

i feel stolen,  
wound up in  
gutless  
unlove  
and left  
half-stagge-  
ringly  
alone

—til 11,  
wait for  
TV to goo  
ff and  
step through  
the bedroom,  
impatiently  
lying awake  
in bed.

when sleep arrives,  
dead trivial  
dreams — alone  
in her arms  
like coffin  
air

that mourning,  
the pillows  
smell of her  
hair

anonymous

Mirage

something concerning cream  
and honey      the way they  
melt as one

rapid hearts come streaming,  
beating through the vines of god

— throbbing fingers prod —

alien lovers      familiar strangers  
greet and detest me  
singly   in pairs

i stared at you  
you weren't there

Daren Robert Grey

santa anna

of course, that in  
    (and of)  
itself

tying off loose  
    ends  
(the rate and pace  
of which  
even god is oblivious)

all triviality

i grant it  
to you in a stutter

normally reserved for

funerals and high speeches

how dare you

how dare you whisper  
to me of permanence.

you are not permanent

Daren Robert Grey

## The Church

students professors childrens children  
chuck taylors raggy shirts holy jeans  
un combed and shower-less

church

pass the peace  
shake, smile

our father  
warm hot cold  
hands

blood and body  
folded worship - like hands

is this church

AAAAAAAAAAAAAh !!!!!!!!!!!

novices pass blood and body  
while priest cough on it

assistant priest talk immigration  
while students jump off gorge bridges

the collection  
baskets of faith  
used for the watering of the blood

and the body, just taste less wafers

AAAAAAAAAAAAAh !!!!!!!

This can't be church  
not the way i saw it

AAAAAAhmen

christopher b. stevens

## Sunny Skies

Sunny skies,  
Lemon ice,  
And a pair of shades  
Are paradise.

While frisbee flippin'  
And Hawaiiin style  
Are only second  
To a pretty smile.

Life's a beach  
When Spring begins,  
As the days rock on  
'Til the nights roll in...

When a passionate kiss  
And the fireflies  
are all that remain  
Of the sunny skies.

Pat Glynn

Untitled

The Dripdryicewatermainstreet-  
lightyearbookstandbypassovertime lineup-  
townhouseflypaperbackboardwalkout-  
sidestepssisterhoodornamnet

In the personal section  
It was listed as lost.  
The owner wanted it  
At any cost.  
The only description  
Was a thingamajig  
With a whatchamacallit  
About "yay big".  
That was years ago  
But I'll never forget  
'Cause to this day  
I haven't seen one yet.

Pat Glynn